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PRESS RELEASE

Support to Community Forestry and Fisheries in Kratie and Stung Treng Provinces is scaled up under a new Partnership Programme with contribution from Switzerland of US\$2.1 million for the initial phase

Phnom Penh, 9 January 2015

Community fisheries, community forestry and conservation programmes in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces will be scaled up under a joint partnership programme of local and international organizations that was launched today in a ceremony organized by the Programme's managing organization, the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme Asia (NTFP-EP). Representatives from the **Partners for Forestry and Fisheries Cambodia (PaFF) Programme** together with delegates from the provincial governments of Kratie, Stung Treng and of the Forestry and Fishery Administrations and the Swiss Agency Cooperation Office in Cambodia declared their commitment for cooperation under the Programme.

Switzerland through the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, SDC will be a major contributor to this program with a planned support of US\$2.1 million for the first phase of the **Partners for Forestry and Fisheries Cambodia (PaFF)** programme. The PaFF Programme aims to improve, increase and scale up support to Community Forestry and Fisheries in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces in order to enable communities (in particular ethnic communities and women) secure access to natural resources as a way to improve food security and increase their income.

The PaFF Programme will be implemented with four local and international organisations namely the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme Asia (NTFP-EP), RECOFTC (The Centre for People and Forests), World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA), and with the in-kind contribution of the Royal Government of Cambodia (the Forestry Administration and the Fishery Administration at sub-national levels). The Partnership Programme interventions combine the rich experience of these multi-sector partners to enable forestry and fishery dependent communities respond better to the challenges and tensions created by rapid economic growth and environmental

degradation, while improving nutrition and income levels through diversified and sustainable income strategies from natural resources.

Mrs. Rahel Boesch, Director of Cooperation for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Cambodia, welcomed this important program with its strong focus on strengthening livelihoods of poor people combined with the sustainable use of natural resources..*“The Partnership Programme brings important and experienced organisations together to work closely with the authorities. PaFF will need continuous and consistent political support from all stakeholders, so that it can contribute positively towards addressing the critical challenges Cambodia faces in sustainable management of its natural resources, and alleviating poverty by enhancing equitable and sustainable development for all Cambodians, especially women and vulnerable groups.*

Mrs. Maria Teresa Guia-Padilla, Chairperson of NTFP-EP Asia, noted that *“the partnership programme emphasises a strong integrative and collaborative approach. Livelihood and natural resource management, technical support and capacity building activities are planned in the programme around key potential products: processed fish, bamboo, forest honey, mushrooms, rattan, cassava, including ecotourism activities. These activities will be managed by Community Forestry and Fishery groups and we expect that support from the authorities and market actors are enhanced through the PaFF Programme.”* NTFP-EP Asia is a regional organisation active in the support to building the capacity of community based organisations in the sustainable harvest, value addition and marketing of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). NTFP-EP Cambodia country programme has been supporting various community based organisations in their NTFP development initiatives and projects in six (6) provinces including Kratie and Stung Treng since 2007.

Mr. Chhith Sam Ath, Country Director at WWF, shared that they envisage the partnership programme to help secure a strong local governance mechanism that supports both the livelihood of the people and the conservation and protection of the rich biodiversity and critical habitats within the landscape. *“We expect the rich ecosystem of the landscape to provide proper and sustainable life to its communities. By the organisations, authorities and communities working together and putting each of our expertise in a combined effort we gain more confidence sin being able to achieve significant positive results for both people and biodiversity”.* WWF has for at least 10 years been running a landscape conservation programme in Cambodia (particularly in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces) and Lao PDR (in the Siphandone islands). WWF is a leading player in a regional campaign to stop the development of hydropower dams in the Mekong mainstream such as the Don Sahong Dam in Lao PDR which would block fish migration and natural flow of sediments critical to food availability, nutrition and agricultural production and other livelihood activities that communities living along the Mekong River and surrounding communities depend upon.

As a local organization with the longest grounding in Stung Treng Province with their support to community forestry and community fisheries, **Mrs. Luy Rasmey, Executive Director of CEPA**, asserted that “PaFF shall provide an important opportunity to bring NGO partners together to assist the communities more effectively and efficiently to reach the critical goal of securing community rights to use, manage their natural resource and improve their livelihood.”

Mrs. Hou Kalyan, Country Programme Coordinator of RECOFTC (Centre for People & Forests), declared that the PaFF Programme provides a *“continuity to the partnership approach that RECOFTC (Centre for People & Forests) together with the Forestry Administration under the auspices of the European, USAID and other development partners support, has been taking since 2008 in developing Community Forestry throughout the country. In particular, PaFF will scale up and continue the support to CF through further livelihood and sustainable forest and fisheries management interventions.”*

The PaFF Programme aims to support up to 75 communities in the implementation of their community forestry and fishery management plans and over-all development and equitable sharing of livelihood and natural resource protection benefits out of community managed forests and fisheries in the two provinces. In particular, the Programme shall work around key biodiversity hotspots of the Mekong Flooded Forest and Ramsar Site in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, home to the critically endangered Irrawaddy Dolphin, but also home to a significant population of poorest resource-dependent communities in the country.

In this first phase, the PaFF Programme is expected to include 30 communities in eight districts in Kratie and Stung Treng provinces, representing approximately 4,000 households, over an area of 18,000 hectares of Community Forestry and 10,000 hectares of Community Fisheries.

The PaFF Programme was initiated in November 2014; the first phase is planned until December 2016, overall it is planned in totally three phases and will last until 2022. The PaFF seeks actively to get other key development partners on board and to broaden the support.

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